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SUBJECT: OUTSPOKEN JOURNALIST DETAINED AT CAMP ALPHA YAYA

REF: CONAKRY 000258

¶1. The Guinean website lejourguinee.com reported that Moise Sidibe, a journalist for l'Independant newspaper, along with one of his sons, was apprehended the night of May 27-28 by soldiers and detained at Camp Alpha Yaya, headquarters of the ruling junta. Sidibe's boss at l'Independant, Mamadou Dian Balde, has been an active participant in the Embassy's Human Rights Working Group.

¶2. Sidibe is known for his articles that are critical of those in power. On the morning after the arrest, l'Independant published an article by Sidibe that was highly critical of Moussa Dadis Camara, head of the CNDD and self-proclaimed President of the Republic. The article was titled "Les Grosses Bevues" (The Big Blunders) and discussed Dadis's missteps, unworldliness and short temper. The article said Dadis was cut from the same mold as Sekou Toure and Lansana Conte. The article was also critical of the international community, but most of its heat was directed at the CNDD.

¶3. A source at the newspaper said that Sidibe and his son were arrested at a drinking establishment near his residence, along with several other patrons of the bar. The source said that a team from the office of the fight against drugs and banditry, including the head of the office, Captain Thieboro Camara, were on patrol in the area and began making arrests. As of this writing Sidibe and his son have been held for five days. Sidibe has not been allowed to speak to anyone. He was only allowed one phone call to a friend in which he said he was being detained. Sidibe is approximately 50 years old and his son is a teenager.

¶4. The association of private media in Guinea told the PD press assistant that they intend to contact Dadis to ask for the release of Sidibe. The news director of l'Independant, Mamadou Dian Balde, said that all of the independent newspapers will comment on the arrest in their next issue. According to Balde, the mother and wife of Sidibe met with him over the weekend and said that he is doing well and has not been mistreated. The Conseil National de la Communication (CNC) has not yet made any public statement on the arrest. When PAO contacted the president of the CNC on June 1 to ask about the arrest, he claimed it was the first he had heard about it.

¶5. Comment: At this point it is unclear whether Sidibe was arrested because of his newspaper articles or if he was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time. PD press assistant has spoken to several of his colleagues who confirmed the arrest. Embassy Conakry is currently looking into the detention as well as a possible response.

¶6. Comment Continued: L'Independant has a reputation as one of the more independent newspapers in Guinea. They have been critical of the CNDD and the editor-in-chief has been a guest on several radio shows in which he criticized the junta. L'Independant was one of the only major newspapers that did not take money from Dadis when he freely distributed funds recently to Guinean journalists (Reftel). It is possible the CNDD will use this arrest to send a message to other journalists and will have a chilling effect on freedom of expression in Guinea in the run up to legislative and presidential

elections. End comment.
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